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## **US FOREST SERVICE ANNOUNCES FINAL DECISIONS ON MANAGING RECREATION IN THE UPPER CHATTOOGA CORRIDOR**

*Final decisions allow boating in winter, early spring and protect highly valued fishing area*

(Columbia, S.C.) Jan. 31, 2012 –U.S. Forest Service officials today announced final decisions on managing recreation in the upper segment of the Chattooga Wild and Scenic River (WSR) Corridor. The decisions include new opportunities for boating in the winter and early spring between Green Creek in North Carolina and Lick Log Creek in South Carolina. Current management, or not boating, will be maintained year round between Lick Log Creek and Hwy. 28, an area that includes the popular Delayed Harvest, a highly valued trout fishery. The three forest supervisors in South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia based their decisions on a new Alternative 13A that the agency developed after additional analysis and in response to public comments received last year.

“Our decisions protect a variety of existing, high-quality recreation experiences, offer new whitewater boating opportunities and use season, reach and flow restrictions to minimize potential conflict between the two,” said Paul Bradley, forest supervisor for the Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests in South Carolina. “Boaters will be able to float in the winter and early spring in areas and at a time when high flows are most available and predictable, and when traditional use is low.”

“Allowing boating in the Nicholson Fields would introduce unacceptable levels of conflict,” said Bradley. “And that’s something we’ve worked extremely hard to avoid.”

Although the forest supervisors have made their decisions, boaters won’t be able to float right away.

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*The mission of the USDA Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the Nation’s forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.*

## **2-2-2-2      USFS ANNOUNCES FINAL DECISIONS ON MANAGING RECREATION IN THE UPPER CHATTOOGA CORRIDOR**

“Now that we’ve made our decisions, we have some work to do before boaters can float the upper river like printing boater permits, installing permit boxes, finalizing supervisors’ orders,” said Bradley. “We expect to be ready to allow boating no later than mid-March.”

The forest supervisors’ decisions also take management actions that will protect the upper segment of the Chattooga WSR Corridor for future generations. They establish new visitor capacities to maintain existing opportunities for solitude, as well as protect the river’s outstandingly remarkable values—biology, history, scenery, recreation and geology and preserve the wilderness character of the Ellicott Rock Wilderness. Other actions include maintaining the current prohibition on commercial boating and boating in the tributaries on the upper segment; preventing large woody debris removal without agency approval; and redesigning, relocating or closing some trails and campsites and maintaining sustainable ones. In addition, the agency will continue to monitor visitor use and its impacts.

The agency’s decisions have been many years in the making, during which time many individuals and organizations haven’t always seen eye-to-eye on how to manage the upper segment of the Chattooga WSR.

“The other forest supervisors and I hope today’s decisions will bring closure to the differences many folks have had over how this precious, valuable resource should be managed,” said Bradley. “We’ll be seeking public input on implementation in the near future. When we’re ready for additional input, we’ll make an announcement. We are hopeful this will provide an opportunity to bring everyone together with a common goal of protecting the Chattooga River for enjoyment by future generations.”

Information related to managing recreation uses in the upper segment of the Chattooga Wild and Scenic River Corridor can be found on the web at <http://fs.usda.gov/scnfs>.

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